

*The Brutishness of Despising RE-
LIGION, and the Treatment
due to it.*

A
SERMON

Preach'd before the
University of OXFORD,

At St. MARY's,

On *Ast-Sunday*, July 8th 1722.

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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the
Univerſity of OXFORD,
On ACT-SUNDAY, &c.

Matth. VII. 6.

*Give not that which is Holy unto
the Dogs, neither caſt ye your
Pearls before Swine, leſt they
trample them under their
Feet, and turn again and
rent you.*

CAST not Gemms before Swine * is a
Proverbial Exprefſion, to this Day
extant in the Jewiſh Writings;
And tho' conſider'd in it ſelf, it calls no

* Vid. Druf. Præterit. in loc.

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more for our Attention, than other Sentences of the like kind, which under a figurative and borrow'd Phrase express some pertinent Observation upon humane Life, or else prescribe some useful Direction to order and conduct it: yet when we remember how it comes to us, recommended by that Divine Mouth, from whence we learn the Laws of our Practice, and derive the purest Streams of Saving Knowledge, this must enforce it with a new Authority, and advance it among the Rules and Precepts of our holy Religion.

The Nature of such Sentences, containing an entire Sense of their own, might easily bear me out in proceeding to treat of this before us, without relation to the Context, and in that general Sense wherein the *Jews* explain it, “* That we
“ should not commit the Doctrine or Pre-
“ cepts of Wisdom to him who has no
“ Sense, or Notion of its Value; for he
“ who knows not its Worth, or seeks
“ not after it, despises and profanes its
“ Glory, and is worse than the *Swine* that
“ pollutes and rolls it self in Mire. The
Wisdom, of which they give such high
Encomiums, must signify Religion; and

* *Vid. Druf. ut supra.*

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therefore the *Pearls*, by which it is denoted, must intend all those holy Doctrines and Precepts, those Means and Opportunities of Grace, which are held out in the Church, the Benefits of publick Preaching, and of private Counsel, as well as of its more sublime and mysterious Institutions.

The same Thing is but otherwise expressed in the preceding Clause of the Text, where *that which is Holy*, has a very obvious Reference to the *Shew-Bread*, and *Oblations* of the Old Testament, which were esteem'd as Things sacred, or dedicated to God, and were some of them to be eaten by the Priests alone, but all of them so far from being Food for *Dogs*, that they were not permitted to such Persons as lay under any legal Impurity, and much less to those who should despise or ridicule them.

If there be any therefore so absurd, or so ungrateful, as, instead of receiving what is so much for their Advantage, to revile and insult those who come in Friendship to perswade them to it; Against them is this Proverb sarcastically level'd, *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.* But

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But tho' this be the general Design and Meaning of the Proverb, and shall as such be regarded in the following Discourse, yet it may not be dissembled that our blessed Lord has here apply'd it particularly to the Case of Reprehension. However useful or necessary it may be to admonish and reprove our Neighbour, yet in order to this, it were but prudent to consider, whether we our selves be qualify'd to give, or our Neighbour to receive such Reproof. Our own Qualification

Matth. 7. 3, 4, 5. is negatively touch'd in the Verses next before the Text, that so long as we are guilty of the same, or greater Vices our selves, we are but ill-prepar'd to spend our Censures upon others, and find fault with *the Mote that is in our Brother's Eye, when behold a Beam is in our own.* On the other Hand, the Persons reprov'd should not be Men of obstinate and settled Malice, who will most probably despise our wholesome Counsels, if not affront and injure us for giving them. For so it follows in the Text; *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.* From the Words, in the more general Acceptation, I shall take occasion to explain,

I. The

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I. The Character of those Means of Grace, which are afforded us by true Religion, describ'd by *that which is Holy*, and by *Pearls*.

II. The Character of those Persons who abuse or slight them: they are *Swine* to *trample* such *Pearls* under *their Feet*, and they are *Dogs* to *turn* again and *rent* us.

III. The Behaviour that is required of us with relation to such Persons: We must forbear to expose our selves or the Benefits of our Religion to such vile Indignity; we must *not* give *that which is Holy* to such *Dogs*, nor cast our *Pearls* before such *Swine* as these.

I. First then, We have here offer'd to our Consideration a twofold Character of those Means of Grace which are afforded us by true Religion, whether they be the publick Preaching of the Word, or private Advice and Reprehension, or that Administration of the Sacraments, and authoritative Declaration of Forgiveness, which Christ has appointed in his Church: I say we have a twofold Character of these Means of Grace, *viz.*

1. In

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1. In respect of their own Nature and Excellency, as they are call'd *Holy*. And
2. In respect of their Value or Usefulness to us, as they are said to be *Pearls*.

1. First in respect of their own Nature and Excellency, as they are call'd *Holy*. There is a relative, as well as an inherent Holiness, such as tho' it may not reside properly in the Things themselves, yet is attributed to them, upon Account of some Relation they bear to the supreme Being, or to his Worship and Service. Thus the *Temple* of old was reckon'd *Holy* because it was God's *House*, and the *Priest* because he was his *Minister*. And such a Kind of relative Sanctity as this, it is no Wonder if we find ascrib'd to those Ordinances, which are now appointed as the Means of our Salvation, if God's Word and Sacraments be still esteem'd *Holy*, and the Doctrines which are built upon them should be *Holy* too.

But indeed this is not all the Account to be given of their *Holiness*. The *Oracle of God*, flowing from a pure Fountain of most perfect Sanctity, must themselves be pure and perfect; they lay down a compleat System of Religion, a uniform and perfect Rule of Faith and Manners,
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every Way sufficient (if the proper Means be used for understanding them) to inform our Belief, and to regulate our Practice, and *able therefore to make us wise unto Salvation, and thoroughly furnish'd* ^{2 Tim. 3. 15. v. 17.} *unto all good Works.* Let this Word be but deeply engrafted in our Hearts, it will ingenerate the noble Principle of Faith, to govern and direct our outward Conduct, and diffusing its Influence throughout the whole Man, to make us *Holy in all* ^{1 Pet. 1. 15.} *Manner of Conversation.*

And if the Scriptures then are call'd *Holy*, from the Matter they contain, and the Tendency they have to our Sanctification, the same no Question may be said of those religious Doctrines which are founded thereupon, whether inculcated by publick Preaching, or by private Counsel, whether furnishing us with Principles of sound Belief, or Rules of Duty, or reproving our Neglect and Deviation from them. The same, by Parity of Reason, will be said again of those sacred Institutions, which were ordain'd by the same transcendent Holiness, to convey to us the Pardon and Remission of our Sins, and supply us with more plentiful Measures of divine Grace. Nay and these very Considerations (let me
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add) which vindicate their Character of *Holiness*, will serve likewise to shew us in the

2. Second Place, why they are describ'd as *Pearls*: Since these, no doubt, are such Considerations as ought to make them most highly valuable and dear to us. For what could possibly recommend them more to our Esteem, than to remember the Original from whence they come, and the End to which they conduce, that they *come down from God the Father of Lights*, and Author of *every good and perfect Gift*, that they tend likewise to renew and sanctify our Nature, and bring us at last to the Enjoyment of eternal Felicity? For this Reason is *the Kingdom of Heaven*, or the Gospel which proposes such valuable Privileges, compared to a *Pearl of great Price*, which the *Merchant*, when he found it, thought Worth his purchasing at the Expence of every Thing else.

Jam. 1.
17.

Matth. 13.
45, 46.

The Virtue and Excellency of *Pearls* is well known to them who enquire into Nature, and study by the Use of wholesome Medicines, to relieve the Weaknesses and Frailties of the humane Body. But faint is their Resemblance of the sovereign Virtue and Power of those spiritual Reme-

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Remedies, which are reach'd out to us by the Physician of our Souls, prescribed in the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and apply'd in the holy Ordinances of his own Appointment. *More to be desired are they than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold: Sweeter also than Honey, and the Honeycomb. They are more precious than Rubies, and all the things we can desire are not to be compared unto them.* Ps. 19. 10.
Prov. 3. 15

There is one Consideration yet behind, in which we have reason to rejoice that the Allusion fails, and that is Scarcity. There have been Times when it might justly be carried on to this Particular. *The Word of the Lord was precious, i. e. rare and uncommon, in the Days of Samuel's Youth. My People are destroy'd for lack of Knowledge, was God's Complaint in the Times of Hosea. And the Famine foretold by Amos, was not a Famine of Bread, but of hearing the Words of the Lord.* 1 Sam. 3. 1.
Amos 8. 11. Nay, and even at this Day there are some Places, where the Benefits of our Religion are but rarely or partially Dispensed, and that not only in those Parts of the World, which are oppress'd with Pagan or Turkish Ignorance, but even among such as would engross the Christian Name to themselves, where

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the Scriptures are lock'd up in a Language not commonly understood, and one half of the Lord's Supper it self is Sacrilegiously deny'd the People.

With us, thanks be to God, the Case is otherwise. The Scriptures lie open for the Perusal of the People, and they have sufficient Means of understanding them. So that we may say with the Psalmist, *The Lord gave the Word, great was the Company of those that publish'd it.* They who can, may read it by themselves, and all have frequent Opportunities of hearing it in publick. The other Means of Grace are effectually dispens'd by the Hands of such Persons as our Lord has authoriz'd; so that *every one that thirsteth may come freely to the Waters, and he that hath no Money, may yet buy and eat, without Money, and without Price.*

But let not this Plenty make us nauseate the Provision which in it self is delicate. Let us not slight it, because cheap and common, but be induced still more to praise the Bounty of the Giver, who has made such abundant Provision for our spiritual Sustenance, that we cannot perish but by our own gross Stupidity, by chusing, like the Prodigal, to feed on *Husks* with *Swine*, when we might be made welcome

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welcome at our Father's House, nay even by refusing to reach out our Hands, when the Table is so richly spread before us, and the Cup so largely overflows.

The Worth and Virtue of these *Pearls* should make us extreamly fond, and desirous of possessing them, and with the wise Merchant before-mention'd, chuse rather to part with all in the Purchase, than let slip the Opportunity, to *count all* Phil. 3. 8 *Things but as Loss and Dung, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus.* But if we be freed from this Expence and Hazard, if we enjoy the Privilege on easier Terms, let not this lessen it in our Esteem, since our Occasions for it will not therefore abate, but our Weakness and Necessity will equally require it. 'Tis true there must be a due Preparation of Mind, and Sincerity of Heart, to make external Privileges effective of their proper Ends. A bare Attendance on the outward Ordinances of the Word and Sacraments can be of no *Profit*, because *not mix'd with Faith.* They must *lay apart all* Heb. 4. 2. *Filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness,* Jam. 1. 21 *and with Meekness must they receive the engrafted Word,* who are desirous it should *save their Souls.* And they must likewise have a lively Faith in the Merits of Christ's

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Death, and submit their Practice to the Guidance of that active Principle, if they would commemorate it to any good Purpose, and have the Benefits thereof effectually convey'd to them, by the mystical Symbols of his Body and Blood. Yet still on the other Hand, 'tis no less true, that they who neglect the Opportunities so graciously afforded them, who either slight and despise the Privileges themselves, or insult and injure those who would perswade them to accept 'em, are altogether as much, or indeed, more inexcusable, than the unprofitable Hearers of the Word, the unfruitful Attenders on the Ordinances of Religion; inasmuch as to them belong the Characters that come next to be consider'd under the

II. Second Head of Discourse, inasmuch as those are the *Swine* that *trample* our *Pearls under their Feet*, and these the *Dogs* that *turn again and rent* us.

The Weakness of humane Reason, occasion'd by our Fall from Innocence, we are at Liberty to repair under the blessed Influences of the Gospel, by the Assistance and Energy of Grace. And this not only in that inferior Understanding of the Works

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Works of Nature, and Maxims of civil Policy, which our corrupted Reason may in some Measure attain, but even in the more sublime and useful Knowledge of divine Truths, and in a proper Application of them, to direct our Practice, and to bring our Wills and Affections in Subjection to the Law of God. Whilst we attend to such Improvement of our Faculties, we deserve the Character of reasonable Creatures. But if we invert that order, and suffer the Passions to usurp upon our Reason, so far we Unman ourselves, we debase the Dignity of the rational Nature, and degenerate to Brutes. However we may continue Men in Shape, we become Brutish in our Minds, not led by the gentle Influence of Reason, but violently hurried on by Sense and Appetite.

Such is the Condition of all those who allow themselves in the Practice of habitual Sin, but of none so remarkably, as of them who cast their Contempt directly upon the only Methods that can be proposed or followed to relieve their Malady, and restore them to the Powers of Reason. Their Disease must needs be desperate, who will use no means for their Recovery. And they who offer open despite un-
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to the Spirit of Grace, who blaspheme that holy Name by which they are call'd, despise that holy Word of God, and ridicule those sacred Institutions, which alone can lead them to Felicity, and rescue them from future Destruction, they must have plunged deeply in the Gulf of Brutality, and have none to thank but themselves, if they be left at last to perish in their Folly.

Such Madness indeed one would think hardly possible, if there were some faithful Monitor at hand, to remind them of their Duty, and earnestly inculcate the Importance of those things, which they are so apt to overlook and despise. *A*

Pro. 5. 11. Word fitly spoken (says Solomon) is like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver, which are both Pleasant to the Eye, and Valuable to the Owner. And therefore the Men on whom we bestow such valuable Words, one would expect, should be improv'd and enrich'd by them. But alas! 'tis often otherwise, the most wholesome Advice is lost and thrown away upon them, the Brutal Principle prevails over the Rational, and He that is filthy will be filthy still. As an Ear-ring of Gold, and an Ornament of fine Gold, so is a wise Reprover (but upon whom? not upon every one

*Rev. 22.
11.*

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one reprov'd, but only) *upon an obedient* Pro. 5. 12.
Ear. The Perverse and Disobedient, dis-
saining Reformation, will cast his Words
behind them. They *hate* that *Reproof*
which should reclaim and make them
better, and therefore they are *Brutish* in Pro. 12. 1.
the account of the wisest of Men, or
void of that reasonable Conduct and Be-
haviour, which might make them wor-
thy of the Character of Men. Much
more if they proceed farther, and requite
the Kindness of such Reprehensions with
Malice and Ill-will, if they shall vio-
lently assault their Reprover in his own
Person, or wound his good Name by
Slander or Invective, or study any other
way to work his Mischief. These things
must argue the Absence of that Thought
and serious Reflection, which should be
the distinguishing Mark of reasonable
Creatures. For a Man of Reason would
thus argue with himself: "He who re-
"proves me for my Faults, and would
"perswade me to amend them, who sets
"before me the Danger of persisting in
"them, and points me out the way to
"correct and forsake them; such a Man
"certainly must mean me well, and whe-
"ther I think fit to follow his Advice or
"no, I ought in Gratitude to take it kind-
"ly,

ly, that he has my Interest so much at Heart, at least never to repay his Kindness with injurious Treatment. For that is what one would expect from none but the fiercest of wild Beasts, to fly upon their Benefactors, and worry those who are labouring for their Security.

If such ungrateful Usage be capable of farther Aggravation, it is when the Reprover is bound by the Condition of his Office to deliver such Messages unto them. The Persons of Embassadors are held Sacred by the Law of Nations; the Affronts they receive are resented by the Master in whose Name they come; and to violate their Character is one of the greatest Breaches that can be made upon the Laws of humane Society, and which by Consequence approaches nearly to the Beasts that perish. And shall then the Embassadors of the King of Kings, be reviled, insulted, treated with Despight and Contempt, for the Sake of that Relation which they bear to him, and their Discharge of that Trust he has committed to 'em, with Fidelity and Diligence. And shall the Authors of such vile Indignity be reckon'd, all this while, to have maintain'd the Character of reasonable Creatures, and observ'd the Rules of Humanity

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humanity or common Decency? He knows, no less than earthly Potentates, how to resent the Injury, and he is able to revenge it with a heavier Punishment. *He that despiseth you* (said our King and Saviour to his Disciples) *despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Luke 10. 16. If not then from a sense of Duty, yet out of Love to themselves, let them beware how they provoke his Wrath, which is neither to be eluded by proane Wit, nor over-power'd by worldly strength or Grandeur, nor pacify'd by Bribes. Otherwise whatever be their Readiness of Wit, they sink below the Dignity of their Nature, they degenerate into *Dogs and Swine.*

Those Beasts were *unclean* in the account of the Law, and having some Qualities of no cleanly Aspect, were therefore perhaps chosen Proverbially to set forth the State of harden'd and habitual Sinners. For thus St. Peter by another Proverb sarcastically exposes them, who after Profession made of Christianity, had relaps'd into their former Wickedness: *It is happened* (says he) *unto them* 2 Pet. 2. *according to the true Proverb, The Dog is* 22. *turned to his own Vomit again, and the Sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the Mire.*

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The *Swinish* Temper is most fitly ascribed to Men of gross and sensual Affections, who confine their Views to earthly Satisfaction, and therefore roll themselves and wallow in them, but have no Relish for those more noble and elevated Pleasures, which arise either from the present Practice, or the future Hopes, of Reason and Religion. Therefore they neglect or despise the means of Virtue and Happiness, like those *Gergesens* mention'd in the Gospel, who by keeping such Cattle, had learn'd their sordid Qualities, and be-

Matth. 8. sought the Author of eternal Salvation to depart out of their Coasts, rather than entertain him at the Expence of their *Swine*.

34.

The *Curriish* Temper implies farther a snarling and snappish Disposition, and is properly ascribed to Men of violent and furious Passions, ready to tear and rend all that come near 'em, especially such as shall offer any thing to cross their Inclinations, tho' never so much to their own Welfare and Happiness. By an Allusion therefore to these two Creatures has our blessed Saviour represented the Temper of those Men, who ungratefully refuse the Mercies which he came to proffer, or treat those Persons with Indignity who would perswade them to accept 'em, who
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chuse either, like Swine, to trample our Pearls under their Feet, or else, like Dogs, to turn again and rent us.

From hence then I might observe, that it is sometimes allowable, to speak of wicked Men in terms of Contumely and Disdain. I might strengthen the Observation by an Induction of many other Instances, and take notice how the Pharisees were upbraided, both by our Saviour and the Baptist, as *Serpents*, and a *Generation of Vipers*, how St. Paul exposed *Elymas the Sorcerer*, as a *Child of the Devil*, and *Enemy of all Righteousness*, how Hereticks in general are term'd by St. Ignatius,* *Wild Beasts in humane Shape*, and One of them more particularly by St. Polycarp, † *The First-born of the Devil*. But in regard we are subject to Prejudice and Passion, liable to be mistaken in our Men, and apt to overflow in the Expressions of our Resentment; most unlike our Blessed Saviour, whose Judgment never err'd, and whose Passions never exceeded: I forbear to press his Example in this Particular, 'till we shall find it as easy to re-

Matth. 3.
7. 23. 33.
Acts 13.
10.

* Περιφύλασσε δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ θείων τοῦ ἀνθρώπων. Ignat. in Epist. ad Smyrναεος.

† Επιγινώσκω τὸν πρωτότοκον τοῦ Σατανᾶ. Polycarp. ad Marcion. apud Euseb. l. 4. c. 14.

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strain our Passions within due Bounds, as it is necessary they should bear Proportion to the Nature of the Thing.

Rather let the Odiousness of the Characters, which our Lord has drawn, excite our utmost Care and Caution, that we never deserve them our selves, nor unprofitably throw away our Time and Labour upon such as do. Which brings me to the

III. Third and Last Thing observable in the Text, namely, The Behaviour that is required of us with relation to such Persons: We must forbear to expose our Selves, or the Benefits of our Religion, to such vile Indignity; we must *not give that which is Holy to such Dogs, nor cast our Pearls before such Swine* as these.

It is the Method used by God Himself, to deliver up incorrigible Sinners to a reprobate Sense, and leave them to be guided by those *vile Affections*, which they chuse to follow. Tho' he may bear long with them, and try them by sundry Methods of Conviction, yet his *Spirit*
 Gen. 6. 3. *shall not always strive*, he will not perpetually endure their Insolence; but when they shall have stood out against all his
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Overtures, they shall then be finally forsaken by him, and given up to the Perverseness of their own Hearts. Where the Evil is general, and the Contagion has spread it self throughout a whole Nation, even the Light of his Word, the glad Tydings of the Gospel shall sometimes be withdrawn, their *Candlestick* Rev. 2. 5. shall be removed out of his place, and the *Kingdom of God* shall be taken from them, Mat. 21. and given to a Nation bringing forth the *Fruits thereof* ⁴³. The kind Offers of his Grace shall be with-holden from them, inasmuch as they have shewn themselves not capable of being *drawn with Cords of a Man, with Bands of Love*. His gentle Chastisements shall be no longer used for their Recovery and Amendment, inasmuch as they have judged themselves unworthy of everlasting Life: *I will not* (says he Aet. 13. ^{46.} to Israel by his Prophet, *I will not*) *punish your Daughters when they commit Whoredom, nor your Spouses when they commit Adultery. Ephraim is joined to Idols: let him alone.* Hos. 4. 14. Or if in this Case he should Punish, v. 17. it is not in the way of Fatherly Correction, but Judicial Vengeance; it is not with a View to reclaim them from their Folly, but to revenge their obstinate Ingratitude, and set them for *Ensamples* unto

2 Pet. 2.6. unto those that shall after live Ungodly.

Suitably to this Method of Proceeding, our blessed Saviour likewise has left us his Example; and tho' the whole People of the *Jews* was not, during his Residence on Earth, arrived to such Maturity of Wickedness, as to be entirely forsaken; yet he bestowed not his Favours upon them without great Distinction, and where he met with a grosser and more obstinate Kind of Infidelity, he was there more sparing of his Miracles, and *did not many mighty Works among them, because of their Unbelief.*

*Matt. 13.
58.*

In like manner he directed his Apostles, that if any should *not receive* them, *nor hear* their Words, they should quickly leave such an ungrateful People, and *when they departed out of that House or City,* should *shake off the very Dust of their Feet,* for a Testimony against them. Agreeably

*Mar. 6. 11.
Luke 10.
10, 11.*

*Acts 13.
45, 46.*

to which Direction we find St. Paul and Barnabas, when they saw the *Jews fill'd with Envy* at their Preaching of the Gospel, and setting themselves in direct Opposition to their Doctrine, *Contradicting and Blaspheming*: we find they gave them up as desperate and hopeless Persons, *be- took themselves to the Instruction of the more Candid and Impartial Gentiles,* (book

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of the Dust of their Feet against them, and went unto Iconium. To the same purpose the Apostles have advised us to *beware of* Phil. 3. 2. *dogs, to have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkeness, but to reprove* Eph. 5. 11. *them, so long as there is room for Hope, and after that to reject their Communion and avoid their Company, not to receive them into our Houses, neither bid them God* 1 John v. 10. *speed, to use no familiar Intercourse or conversation with them.* All which, as it is partly design'd for the Recovery of those who are not perfectly Incorrigible, so likewise for the Shame and Confusion, and Punishment of them that are.

Indeed since we are subject to Prejudice and Passion (as was said before) and have neither those *Treasures of Wisdom* which resided in *Jesus*, nor that *Measure of the Spirit* which conducted the Apostles, we should be extremely cautious how we judge Men arriv'd to such Degrees of Obstinacy, and chuse rather to err on the charitable Side, rather to continue our Reproofs too long, than to forbear and leave them off too soon. We should consider whether those Reproofs themselves have not had such Mixtures of Gall and Bitterness, as may have contributed to harden the Sinners they were meant to

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reclaim; or whether there might not be some secret Prejudices (as in Matters of false Doctrine it may often happen) to which our Counsels were not duly adapted, and which therefore we should still attempt to rectify, with the most Christian *Spirit of Meekness* and Discretion. In one Word, we should be well assur'd of the Truth of the Fact, that the Persons we speak of are obstinately bent on Wickedness, we ought not to take up with Jealousies and Suspicions, with the uncertain Clamour and Report of others.

When the Case is manifest, and the Crime certain, even then in Proportion to the different Degrees of it, our Care for the Sinner must differently be remitted. The habitual Practice of any open and notorious Sin, is sufficient to exclude the Sinner from holding Communion with the Church in the most sacred Office of the *Eucharist*, 'till he shall have given some publick Proof of his Repentance, and made due Satisfaction to that Congregation which before he Scandaliz'd. The Reverence which is due to the mysterious Symbols, or rather to the Mysteries conceal'd under them, and the Edification of our Brethren by such Examples, require us to take care that such *Holy* Ordinances

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ances be not profaned by *Dogs*, nor such valuable *Pearls trampled under Foot* by *Swine*. And however some among our Men of Latitude may deny any such Power of the Priest, to exclude or reject from the Communion, against whom I have not Leisure to dispute at present; yet from the Doctrine of our Church (as is set forth in the *Rubrick* before the Office for the *Communion*) it evidently appears to be, not his Privilege only, but his Duty, to forbid their approaching to the Altar of God, and profaning those Sacred Mysteries of our Religion.

But yet this is not a sufficient Reason to forbear the Offices of Reproof and Exhortation, whether in Publick or in Private. The Man that is scandalously Wicked, must not immediately be given up as irreclaimable; and tho' there are some Offices of Religion from which he ought to be shut out, yet let him not at once be excluded from that Instruction and Advice, from hearing those Promises and Threatenings of the Gospel, which may greatly conduce to his Amendment. Indeed, the publick Preaching of the Word, must be free and open to all comers, till the Church, by a publick Sentence of Excommunication, shall debar them from

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it. But whether the Church proceeds to such Severity or no, if we find them to be obstinately bent upon their wicked Courses, if they hate to be reform'd, and fly in the Face of their Reprovers; especially if their Crimes be otherwise of a more gross and heinous Nature, or their Tenets destructive of the common Principles of Religion, or such as cast a general Contempt upon its Ordinances, 'tis time to lay aside our private Endeavours, and concern our selves no longer for their Reformation. For to what End should we consume our Time, which might be employ'd to better Purposes, to what End should we fatigue our selves with anxious Care, about their Profit and Advantage, who resolve to reap no Profit or Advantage from it? The Physician, as he goes not to the Healthy, so he gives over the Incurable. When either the Disease is too malignant to be cured, or the Diseased himself too obstinate to observe what is prescribed him, it can be to no purpose to multiply Prescriptions, the Patient must be left to Die and Languish under it.

And now to speak a Word or two by way of Application; I fear we shall find it but too easy to discover Men of the same

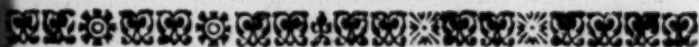
same Complexion with those brutish Persons describ'd to us in the Text. The Age abounds with so much impudent Prophaneness and stubborn Infidelity, with such Contempt of all Things Sacred, and such injurious Treatment of those who bear relation to the Service of God: The Articles of our most Holy Faith have been so miserably mangled and abus'd, the Kingdom of Christ set forth as an unactive Dream, the Powers of the Priesthood expos'd as so much Cant and Delusion, and the Sacraments themselves as meer Juggle and *Conjuration*; that the Knowledge of the Gospel, as great and valuable a Blessing as it is, will but aggravate the Crime of such incorrigible Blasphemers, and therefore in the End it must encrease their Condemnation. And what then shall we say to Persons of so profligate a Character? Shall we cast our *Pearls before* them to be *trampled under Foot*? Shall we expose our selves to their Rage and Fury? In pure Charity to their Souls, I would suspend the Application, and take some Time to enquire how far their Error may arise from Prejudice, and how far it must needs proceed from the settled Malice and Obstinacy of their Heart. But when *Charity* it self, which
hopeth

1 Cor. 13. 7 *hopeth all Things*, can no longer *hope* for their Conversion, but must impute their Sin to the intolerable Pride and Rancour of their Mind, we must no more concern our selves for that *weh* is impossible; our Silence, but for the Sake of others, would be the best Answer to their Calumnies. We should take care indeed, as far as in us lies, to prevent the spreading of so dangerous an Infection, that the Contagion be not Epidemical, lest those Blessings be remov'd we so ungratefully despise, lest *the Kingdom of God*, the very Knowledge of Salvation, should be taken from us, and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof: Above all we should be careful to fortify our selves against its killing Malignity, that we be not consenting to the Counsels of such Men, nor assisting to their Enterprizes, that we do not, by giving way to them in less Matters, put it in their Power to effect greater, that our Soul may never come into their Secret, nor our Honour be united unto their Assembly; that so finally whatever Havock they may make in the Church, whatever Mischief they may do Themselves, and all whom their poisonous Influence can reach, we may at least be, like the *few Souls* in the *Ark of Noah*, preserved

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erved from the general Destruction, and by improving the present, may come to enjoy the future and eternal Privileges of the Church of God. This God of his infinite Mercy grant us for the Sake of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory now and henceforth for evermore. *Amen.*



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